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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5586
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY 0642
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7191
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0528
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5986
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 3402
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 8316
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 9793
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3577
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 6819
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RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001925

UNCLAS TOKYO

DEPT FOR OES/IHB AMBASSADOR LOFTIS
DEPT FOR EAP/J, EAP/EX, CA
USDA PASS TO APHIS, FAS FOR BURDETT
HHS PASS TO CDC
HHS FOR OGHA
DEPT PASS TO AID/GH/HIDN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [AESC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)
AMGT, MG, EAGR, JA
SUBJECT: MGSF01 AUGUST 19 UPDATE ON H1N1 OUTBREAK IN JAPAN

REF: TOKYO 1171 and previous

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11. (U) Summary: Three people have died from the H1N1 virus in Japan during the past week, Japan's first H1N1 related deaths, and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) is reporting nationwide infection rates that are at epidemic levels. On August 19, the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare announced that H1N1 has reached the full-scale epidemic stage in Japan and requested that the public take measures against further infections. End Summary.

H1N1 APPROACHES EPIDEMIC LEVELS IN JAPAN

12. (U) The H1N1 infection rate in Japan has increased dramatically this summer. The latest NIID report (for the August 3-9 period) indicates an average of 0.99 patients per facility exhibiting flu-like symptoms, based on a nationwide reporting network of 5000 designated medical institutions. This approaches the epidemic threshold of one patient per facility and represents a sharp increase over 0.55 infected patients per facility noted in the July 27-August 2 report. The total number of nationwide infections was estimated to be 60,000 during the August 3-9 reporting period. On August 19, the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, Yoichi Masuzoe, held a press conference declaring an epidemic and asked the public to take preventive measures. NIID estimates that 79 percent of the influenza cases reported from May 5, 2009 to August 9, 2009 have been H1N1.

13. (U) According to the NIID report, H1N1 has entered a full-scale epidemic stage in Okinawa with an average of 20.36 patients reported per facility. Separately, Okinawa Prefectural Government (OPG) officials report that the influenza infection rate in Okinawa prefecture continued to increase between August 10 and August 16; they estimate that there are currently 20,000 H1N1 infected patients in Okinawa prefecture, with an average of 29.6 cases per facility. This new data triggered the OPG to issue a public warning that Okinawa is experiencing an influenza epidemic on August 19. U.S. military public health officials in Okinawa are also reporting a spike in flu-like symptoms on U.S. bases compared to last year. Experts note that while influenza infection rates do tend to spike during the summer months in Okinawa, this increase is larger than usual.

14. (U) Five other prefectures surpassed the 0.99 infections per facility denoting an epidemic: Nara (1.85), Osaka (1.80), Tokyo (1.68), Nagasaki (1.50), and Nagano (1.44) during the latest reporting period. (Note. We do not have data on absolute numbers of infected persons in Japan since the NIID only publishes the results of a survey of 5000 designated medical institutions. The NIID methodology controls for population size in prefectures. End note).

JAPAN'S FIRST H1N1 RELATED CASUALTIES

15. (U) The first three H1N1-related deaths have been confirmed in Japan. On August 15, a 57 year old man suffering from kidney and heart illness in Okinawa became the first person to die of H1N1. On August 18, a man in his late 70s, also suffering from kidney disease, died in the city of Kobe from H1N1. On August 19, a female patient in her 80s suffering from multiple myeloma died of complications associated with H1N1 in Nagoya.

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16. (U) A senior researcher at NIID commented in the Nikkei Newspaper that a full-fledged outbreak of influenza is expected on Honshu, Japan's largest and most populous island, after schools re-open in September. The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) expects to secure vaccine for 14-17 million courses by the end of this year and hopes to start inoculations in October.

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